

Message Text

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14

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01

COME-00 TRSE-00 SCEM-02 CG-00 INT-08 DODE-00 SS-20

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8978

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG HK

SUBJECT: PETROLEUM--BUNKERING PRIORITIES

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. IN DECEMBER 11 SPEECH TO KIWANIS, THE DIRECTOR OF OIL SUPPLIES, ROY PORTER, SAID SHIPS BRINGING RAW MATERIALS IN OR TAKING DOMESTIC EXPORTS OUT WILL RECEIVE BUNKERING PRIORITY WHEN OIL CUTBACKS BEGIN TO AFFECT SUPPLIES. SHIPS THEN COME

HERE FOR BUNKERING PURPOSES ONLY AND PASSENGER SHIPS ARE LIKELY TO BE HIT IF BUNKERING ALLOCATIONS ARE REDUCED.

2. CAREFUL TO KEEP HIS REMARKS IN A HYPOTHETICAL CONTEXT, PORTER SAID HIS OFFICE IS DRAWING UP PRIORITIES FOR ALL TYPES OF VEHICLES IN CASE OF A CUTBACK. HE ADDED THAT INDUSTRY FEELS IT CAN ABSORB A 15 PERCENT CUTBACK BEFORE SHORTAGES EAT INTO PRODUCTION.

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3. THE OIL COMPANIES ARE LESS THAN ENCHANTED WITH THE PROPOSED BUNKERING PRIORITIES. THEY HAVE LONGSTANDING CONTRACTS WITH A NUMBER OF LINES WHO COME TO HONG KONG ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY FOR BUNKERING AND CHANDLERY. FACED WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AN INABILITY TO HONOR THESE COMMITMENTS IN HONG KONG, SOME

COMPANIES ARE TOYING WITH THE IDEA OF DIVERTING OIL IMPORTS TO OTHER LOCATIONS WHERE BUNKERING SERVICES COULD BE RENDERED. THIS STRIKES US AS IMPROBABLE, SINCE (A) IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY NEIGHBORING GOVERNMENTS WILL BE MORE LENIENT THAN THE HKG, AND (B) ACTIONS THAT TENDED TO COMPROMISE THE HKG FUEL ALLOCATION SYSTEM WOULD CREATE INORDINATE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS FOR THE ALREADY HARRIED OIL FIRMS; NONETHELESS, WE WILL KEEP THIS DEVELOPMENT UNDER SCRUTINY.
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4. THE FUEL CRISIS IS NOT WITHOUT ITS LIGHTER SIDE. ENRAGED BY THE CURFEW FOR NEON LIGHTS, REPORTED IN REFTTEL, THE TOPLESS BAR HOSTESSES OF WANCHAI ARE PREPARING FOR A PROTEST MARCH ON GOVERNMENT HOUSE. DETAILS ON INTENDED PROTEST GARB ARE A TIGHTLY HELD SECRET.
OSBORN

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